

Dealing With Common Disputes Between Muslims

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The following article is a response to the too often occurring phenomenon of Muslims disputing between one another or unjustifiably accusing one another of sins and deviations. This sad occurrence, that ideally should not happen between brethren, has many causes. Sometimes the matter in question and the actions taken by one party or another can reach the level of sheer enmity and has lead to major rifts and caused great confusion among Muslims and those who should be assisting one another in righteousness and piety are instead at each others throats! Please take note of the actual examples and practical measures brought forth by the author and may Allah protect us from the regrettable situations described and help us to overcome them in the event of their occurrence, ameen. A close look is being taken in the situation where a Muslim accuses another of not respecting the great scholars of Islam. - Ed.

How Should Muslims Treat Differing Opinions Among the Major Scholars of Ahlus-Sunnah?

We as Muslims are obligated to follow what we think and feel is correct, based upon the evidences of the Qur'aan and Sunnah. It doesn't mean that we show disrespect for any scholars or curse them if we do not agree with every single opinion of theirs. It is not allowed for the student of knowledge to do blind taqleed (blind and unquestioned following) in matters that he can research and see the evidences of both sides. One should however be qualified - in general in basic matters of the Islamic sciences - to read what the scholars say about an issue, and then do ijtihaad based on what they said and choose an opinion amongst their opinions. This is basically the ijtihaad that a student of knowledge is capable of.

Never should such a student willingly or intentionally speak in a derogatory manner about any great scholar, or try to denigrate his status. A student of knowledge should express nothing but love and respect for the 'ulamaa. It is important that we take from ALL the major scholars in our times, such as Shaykh Ibn Baaz, Shaykh Al-Albaanee, and Shaykh Ibn Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy upon their souls) etc, and that we do not let differences of fiqh - or other differences - that exist between these scholars become differences amongst our hearts, and cause us to look down upon one another.

If someone wishes to follow one particular opinion from one scholar, then that is fine, but let him not consider someone who opposes this particular opinion to be a deviant, especially when the major scholars themselves do not do so. How many points did Shaykh Al-Albaanee and Shaykh Ibn Baaz (rahimahumallah) differ in, yet did any of these points cause one of them to look down upon the other and consider him to be weak or deviated? No. Rather, there was nothing but love and respect between these two great scholars of the da'wah as-salafiyyah (the call to the way of the pious previous generations of the Muslims), and we should all learn from them in this.

What To Do In The Face Of Accusations

It is important that when we hear something about someone, we check it and verify that it is true, in accordance with the statement of Allaah:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِن جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَأٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا

"O You who believe, if a faasiq comes to you, then confirm (what he says)..." [Al-Hujuraat (49):6].

Likewise, when a wife came to the Prophet (sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam) and complained that her husband did not pray Fajr, and beat her when she prayed, and forced her to break her fast, the Prophet (sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam) called him and confirmed what she said. When the husband explained these three points (which outwardly appear to be major sins, if not bordering on kufr) to the Prophet (sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam), the Prophet (sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam) agreed with him and excused him. [Al-Bukhaari]

Also, when Abdullaah ibn Amr ibn al-Aas (radiallahu 'anhumaa) said, "I will fast every day as long as I live, and pray every night as long as I live" and this news reached the Prophet (sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam), he called for him, and asked him, "Did you say this and this?" And he replied, "Yes, may my mother and father be your ransom...(the hadeeth continues...)" [Al-Bukhaari]

The point is that it is imperative that the Muslim not believe everything he hears, especially when it involves the honour, or even greater - the aqeedah and manhaj - of his brother Muslim. The Prophet (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) said:

"It is sufficient for a person to be a liar if he spreads everything he hears."

It is also important that, after he has confirmed whether something is true or not, he find out WHY that person did or said what he did. This is proven in the hadeeth of Haatib ibn Abee Balta'ah (radiallaahu 'anhu), who sent a letter to the Mushrikeen warning them that the Prophet (sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam) planned to attack them. Outwardly, this is clear and open treachery; the penalty for this should be immediate death! Yet, when the Prophet (sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam) called him, he asked him, "Why did you do what you did!" When Haatib explained why, the Prophet (sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam) said:

"You have spoken the truth! No one should say anything except good about him." [Al-Bukhaari]

So, if a brother gives you a valid excuse for doing what he did, you should accept it from him.

An Important Rule To Apply When Making Judgements

I would like to bring to your attention one simple rule from the sciences of jarh wa tadeel (declaring someone to be weak or strong in narrating hadeeth; and by extension, in his aqeedah or manhaj). Al-Haafidh Adh-Dhahabi said:

"Most of what is narrated from contemporaries about one another [i.e., people from the same place and level] deserves to be rejected and thrown away, nor should it be narrated, nor should it be taken into account as defamation (against him). Rather, the person should be treated fairly and justly."

Likewise, Al-Haafidh Ibn Hajr said:

"A lot of times, there occurs between contemporaries differences (amongst themselves)...so, in all such cases, it is important that we be cautious and consider (all of these factors)."

Basically, the general rule is that if two people do not get along with each other, and there is a strong reason to believe that it is based on something personal between them (for example, they are in the same city and have relatively same status), then in this case, if other people do not agree with his verdict, it is not allowed to take from him in this.

The examples of this are many: Imaam Al-Bukhaari and Imam Adh-Dhuhali, both Imaams of Ahl as-Sunnah, fell into great differences, so much so that Adh-Dhuhali was the cause of Al-Bukhaari getting kicked out of his city. He declared Al-Bukhaari to be a deviant mubtadi' (innovator) in his 'aqeedah! Yet, we do not take this ruling from him, and consider both of these people to be great scholars in their particular fields. Likewise, there occurred some harsh words between Imam Yahya ibn Ma'een and Imaam Ash-Shafi'ee, but we do not take sides between these two great scholars, and ignore what each of them had to say about the other. In another example, there occurred a lot of friction between Imaam Maalik and Muhammad ibn Ishaq (the most famous author of the seerah), to such an extent that Imaam Maalik - keep in mind who he is in knowledge and status - declared Ibn Ishaq to be a Dajjaal amongst the Dajjaals!!! However, we do not take this particular ruling from him, since there is a strong possibility that Shaytaan caused some rift between them, and we find that the other scholars did not agree with Imaam Maalik in this case. In yet another example, the differences between Aboo Nu`aym and Ibn Mandah - both of whom are famous authors and scholars amongst the scholars of Ahlus-Sunnah - reached such a level that it almost broke out into a physical fight! Yet, once again, it is not proper that we quote this incident as a means to show disrespect to any one of these two figures.

In all of these instances, we do not take the statements of these Imaams concerning their contemporaries for two simple reasons:

- 1) We find that those who knew them better did not agree with these rulings
- 2) There is a strong possibility that Shaytaan caused some type of personal friction and problem between them, so we leave these words between them.

This does not lessen the status of the Imaam that we did not take from; rather, it proves that they are only human!

An Evil Scenario

There have been instances where one person sets out to cast blame upon another among the people. At the same time, instead of approaching the one with who he has a dispute or contention with in a brotherly fashion to deal with the matter, such a person outwardly maintains a 'friendly' disposition, giving salaams to the one he really has a problem with, talking with him, etc. apparently ignoring the very wrong that he accuses the person of! He never once at an early stage (when things could likely be solved), comes and gives advice directly to the other person, or cautions about the supposed deviancies etc. However, what needs to be done, is that he immediately contact this person and try to give him naseehah (advice) in a polite manner (this is the general rule; the only time naseehah should be given in public is if the person is spreading incorrect ideas in public). If he ignores going to the person, and instead starts backbiting about him, then in such circumstances the Shaytaan causes a rift between the two. The one may

stop giving salaams to the other and even start spreading that the other is a deviant. It may even go to the extent that he or she goes to colleagues of the other, calls up his or her acquaintances and spreads lies amongst people that the other hardly knows. Another surprising thing is that when a person will NEVER ONCE warn the closest of the other's friends about these supposed deviances. Instead, they only go to people that do not know one other well.

If you believe a person to be a deviant, then the first people that you should approach are his close friends and relatives, so that they may be able to address and correct the situation or not be taken in by him. Surely one should never go to anyone with such a serious charge without clear cut and indisputable evidence to substantiate it.

To conclude, we live in a time of fitnah. One does not like to bring up these points, nor wish to talk about differences. Each and every one of us needs to be spending his time in a much more wiser and useful manner than defending themselves from dispute. Speech made to show the shortcomings of another causes nothing but hardness of the heart, and no one benefits more than Shaytaan when he sees the Muslims who agree on the correct beliefs and way according to the Sunnah and the pious predecessors (as-Salaf) themselves - especially the students of knowledge - attack and defame each other.

It was our hope that inshaa Allaah we could say a word to help prevent and stop the fitnah of false accusation and blaming one another and not allow Muslims to waste their time in such matters any more.

Lastly, one should not necessarily consider the person that spreads rumours about him to be a deviant; rather, one should pray that Allaah guides him and removes whatever is in his heart against his brother or sister. Often such a person may have great potential for da'wah.

We sincerely pray that we will be amongst those concerning whom Allaah says of in the Qur'aan:

وَنَزَعْنَا مَا فِي صُدُورِهِمْ مِّنْ غِلٍّ إِخْوَانًا عَلَىٰ سُرُرٍ مُّتَقَابِلِينَ

﴿٤٧﴾ لَا يَمَسُّهُمْ فِيهَا نَصَبٌ وَمَا هُمْ مِنْهَا بِمُخْرَجِينَ ﴿٤٨﴾

"And We (will) remove whatever is in their hearts of hatred (for each other); (they will be like) brothers, upon couches, reclining and facing each other." [Al-Hijr (15):47]

Wa Aakhira da'waana anil hamdulillaahi Rabbil aalameen